

**Montana State Rehabilitation Council**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 9 – 10, 2016**

# Montana State Rehabilitation Council

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### Disability Rights Montana Conference Room

**Members present:** Rick Heitz, Jim Marks, Linda Zermenio, Coreen Faulkner, Donna Marie Robnett, Anna Gibbs, Amy Capolupo, Mike Woods, Michelle Pickell, John Senn, and Tiffany Costa

**Members absent:** Tom Osborn (excused), Robin Haux, and Frank Podobnik

**Staff and visitors present:** Beverly Berg, Chanda Hermanson-Dudley, Mike Hermanson, Mark Mahnke, Tammy Hogan, Patrick Sanders, Bill Harant, Barbara Schiedermayer, June Hermanson, Kathy Hampton, and Shawn Tulloch

Rick Heitz opened the meeting, introductions were made, and the minutes from March were approved. Rick reminded the Council that there will be an All-Staff meeting in the fall and the Council is invited to attend. There was no public comment.

***National Coalition of State Rehabilitation & Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation reported by Mike Woods:***

Mike talked about the success of the conferences. There was a huge emphasis on making sure the state rehabilitation councils are collaborating with their SILCs. It is important to maintain the collaboration between rehabilitation councils. In some states, conflicts between councils caused a breakdown between those collaborations. A few of the conversations got heated when it came up. The 121 projects can apply for the grant for the technical assistance centers to help with different barriers that they might be facing in those communities. A huge barrier for most communities is the transportation issue. Main focuses of the conference were to overcome barriers and to move away from the minimum wage and sheltered workshops. For surveys on the projects, it seems that phone calls are more effective with getting responses. Mike talked about volunteering and employment opportunities for the surveys. He mentioned the Youth Outreach – reaching out to incarcerated youth – there is a significant percentage of disabled youth incarcerated (about 30-40%; mostly learning disability). They could break free from the cultural ties of the crime culture with outreach and right resources. Project Search is looking for different employers that train from bottom-up (like job shadowing opportunity). Mike mentioned senior long term care. He proposed the idea of self-employment for Durable Medical equipment or over the counter medicine providers to be contractor for the state – this would be more employment opportunities for the consumers. Concerns were expressed regarding Medicaid – it is taking a long time to get reimbursement.

***State and Federal Updates – Jim Marks:***

Jim updated the Council on the state budget. The Executive Planning process consists of asking for changes in the budget. Our division submitted a dozen requests – some projects we submitted and did not get: request for a counselor in Glacier County, Employment Vision, assistance technology specialists. Jim talked about Order of Selection (OOS): Category 3 is closed and Category 2 will be closed on July 1<sup>st</sup>. VR will serve those with most significant disabilities; the rest who apply will be on a waiting list. WIOA requires that 15% of the budget is set aside for the youth with disabilities and the 85% is for everything else we do. There are massive

technology costs coming up: case management system needs to be up to date and up to standard which will cost \$300,000 and new data warehouse to meet the new requirements. Jim talked about assistance technology grant which is basically looking at how assistance technology helps in the rehabilitation process and how to incorporate technology in daily life. Jim talked about Section 511 which is the new civil rights law to be effective on July 22 this year. It means no one under age 24 can go into segregated employment. VR will have to go into workshops and provide people a way out if they want. Enforcement of 511 will be coming from Department of Labor, Department of Education, and Department of Justice. The regulations on WIOA are coming soon – there are some new performance standards and impact measurements.

***Field Services Updates – Chanda Hermanson-Dudley:***

There are a few retirements coming up – the jobs are posted (Hamilton, Bozeman, and Helena). VRBS is working on a branding strategy (slogans to be placed on all publications) to make sure that it is more visible in the community and to consumers – planned to get this done by June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Jim has already mentioned OOS ; Chanda is checking with the staff to find out what are the training needs to prep the staff. Chanda talked about the fair hearings: five appeals (two are case closure issues, one is approving IPE goal, one is evolving the goal into the next step which is more education, and last one is communication issues). Job Driven Voc Rehab Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC) is part of University of Massachusetts, Boston. We might be the only state that does not have staff committed to just serving employers. Business analysis is being designed and redefining service to employers.

***Strategic Plan Update – Mike Hermanson:***

Mike reviewed all strategies on all three Priorities with the Council. There is a need to modernize the service system to be in line with WIOA requirements. The first priority focuses on the services for youth with disabilities attending schools. Tammy Hogan will be following on this and report the progress. The second priority is the emphasis to partner with employers and to increase their awareness of an untapped pool of talented workers with disabilities throughout Montana. We want to dispel stereotypes and highlight their strengths and abilities. The third priority is working with the people with disabilities in a sub-minimum/segregated wage jobs by offering opportunities to choose and achieve competitive integrated employment. A question was asked about statistics of state employers with disabilities. This can be google by typing disabilities statistics annual report. Generally speaking, people with disabilities have a better chance of getting a job in Montana than the rest of the country. Question was asked if anyone from Governor's Office attended the SRC meetings – perhaps that would bring awareness about the need to employ more people with disabilities.

***Transportation Update – Patrick Sanders:***

Pat talked about the different responsibilities as the transportation coordinator which is a bridge between the citizens of Montanans and their transportation options. He helps with various aspects of transportation including the following: repairs of vehicles, tire purchases, car prices quotes, vehicle purchases (often modified according to their disability), bus pass purchases, gas vendors, etc. Patrick works closely with MT Transit system to gather information about their schedule for services, and to make it available on the DOT website and the DPHHS website. He also stated that they are working on finding an insurance company that is willing to support Uber transportation in Montana, so far they have not found any companies yet. About 40 vehicles have been inspected and many people want to utilize the service.

***Blind and Low Vision Update – Beverly Berg:***

Two new hires have been done: one in Great Falls and one in Butte. They will be going through training in South Dakota and will be going to school in January. A couple of transition activities: Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) has few students applying for service – they need adaptive equipment to take home. The I Can Connect program helps to assess the individuals and provide training for them. Beverly talked about having blind vendors for the prisons. The prisoner can order a product and the blind vendor would have a warehouse that they could fill out the order form. She also talked about Fusion program (screen enlargement and screen reading).

***Transitions/Training update – Mark Mahnke:***

Mark talked about the new changes to the VRBS website. Due to the changes/requirements of WIOA, it is important to have visibility on the website. There is a section for youth and Pre-Employment Transition Services on the website with multiple tabs including youth services, transition contacts, and access to the Pre-ETS technical Assistance Center. “Prepare, Connect, and Engage” is the new slogan. VRBS video listing on YouTube (DPHHS) was shown to the Council. All-Staff meeting is set up for October 5 – 7 this fall in Bozeman – topics will be focused on the WIOA changes, etc. There will be speakers. Council is invited to attend. There are six people in training to get masters.

***VRBS Teams Updates******Youth Services – Tammy Hogan:***

VRBS has contracts with 72 school districts. They are continuing to complete the contracts, so the school can bill VRBS for the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Contracts are through September 30 and the contracts will be revised (need additional information). The goal is to get as close as 15% (\$2.5 million) as possible. Question was asked about Category 2 closure affecting the services – it is clarified that the closure only affects the case services but not the services in schools. Movin On has 25 juniors & seniors enrolled for the 1<sup>st</sup> session and the 2<sup>nd</sup> session has about 15. Another summer program called Intro to College is being offered on University of Montana campus and it is for high school students. There is a mentor from the university to help with job exploration and workplace readiness.

***Independent Living Services Update – Bill Harant:***

The State’s three year plan is completed and they are preparing for upcoming changes. He plans to attend the Legislation Day on January 18<sup>th</sup> and the Rally Day on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. A brochure with information on SILC is completed – he received feedbacks on it. There needs to be more information for the Native American Indian population; so a second brochure for that population is created. He is gathering resources to help the veterans in which will help bridge the gap between VA and veterans. Money Follows the Person grant will be winding down in 2019. Part of the state plan is to explore the potential to form a stand-alone non-profit organization. Independent Living needs to be promoted more often and louder. The brand is “Community Means Everybody.”

***VRBS Teams Updates******Assistive Technology – Beverly Berg:***

The team will be doing a survey for all the VRBS counselors to find out about the assistive technology devices and how is it being used with the consumers. The surveys will be sent out in two parts: online and either in person or via phone. The team is also doing a research on which model is best for providing assistive technology to those in need of them. They are also looking in training individuals on how to use the assistive technology devices.

***Employer Services:***

No report at this time; however this team has started to work with Job Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance program and the programs will be started this summer.

***Quality Services – Barbara Schiedermayer:***

There are three main parts of the Quality Services: quality control, hiring new VR counselors, and quality control of the existing materials. Four counselors have been hired and VRBS is in the process of hiring two more. The founding principles of VR: the need to have critical thinkers, to seek out and provide critical information to help clients make informed decisions regarding their vocational futures. Barbara guides the counselors through a variety of exercises that brought them from looking at a disability from an intellectual standpoint to having experienced what it feels like to have a disability. She will probably repeat the foundation training to new counselors before the All-Staff meeting.

***Montana Youth Transitions – June Hermanson:***

June is the director of Montana Youth Leadership Forum and Montana Youth Transition Project – she talked about both programs. Leadership Forum is happening from July 18 – 22 on Carroll College campus. The students that went through the Forum can return as staff. For the Youth Transition project, Council is encouraged to check the website, [www.montanayouthtransitions.org](http://www.montanayouthtransitions.org), for more information. There will be a conference in the fall (November 14 – 16) at Radisson Colonial Hotel, Helena. Several different workshops will be offered for the students, parents, and professionals. Soft Skills class is a popular one. Family Transition Plan training will be offered in Butte and Billings sometime in August. Flyers and brochures were passed out to Council.

***Deaf Service Update – Shawn Tulloch:***

Shawn has moved out of the Bozeman VR office due to the hiring of Counselor Supervisor. She went to a Pepnet Summit last January. The Montana Team is working hard to complete a directory of resources (“Living Independently – Forever Empowered”) for the deaf and hard of hearing students, parents, etc. – hope to finish soon so it can be posted on MSDB, OPI, MT Youth, and VRBS websites. She meets with VR counselors serving deaf. She shares a success story of deaf person getting a hearing test waiver to get CDL and a job driving truck.

***Closing comments:***

Marketing for Vocational Rehabilitation is aimed at having cohesiveness and unity while being able to speak to many audiences, employers, teachers, etc. Council is encouraged to visit this link:

[www.thinkbeyondthelabel.org](http://www.thinkbeyondthelabel.org).

Discussion was made on where to meet and what different topics to cover for the Council. It was agreed to meet in Missoula with possibility of visiting University of Montana (will check with Amy Capolupo), JOBS (Michelle Pickell’s work), Summit Independent Living Center. A brief discussion was made about inviting someone from the Governor’s Office. Due to conflicts, it was agreed to meet on September 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> (instead of September 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>).

The meeting was adjourned.